

careful not to put too near the wall
at the far
end.

Fritz was not mistaken. Fresh air was
blowing
freely through the passage!

Then the boatswain, passing the light
along the
level of the ground, noticed that the
passage was
closed only by a heap of stones which
had no doubt
fallen right down a kind of natural
shaft.

"The door!" he exclaimed.
"There's the
door ! And no need of a key to open it
with ! Ah,
captain, you were in the right of it after
all I "

" Get on to it! Get on to it! " was all
Captain
Gould's reply.

It was easy to clear the passage of the
obstructing
stones. They passed them from hand
to hand,
quite a lot of them, for the heap was five
or six feet
above the ground level. As the work
proceeded the
current of air became stronger. There
most cer-
tainly was a sort of gorge carved out
inside the
mass of the rock.

A quarter of an hour was enough to
clear the
passage entirely.

Fritz was the first through, and,
followed by the
others, he went ten or twelve steps up a
very steep
slope, dimly lighted.

There was no vertical shaft. A gorge,
five or six

feet wide and open to the sky, wound
between two
walls which rose to an immense height,
and a strip
of blue sky formed its ceiling. It was
down this